

School forms asthma program through partnership

By Nadine Stinger, Staff Writer
Kingsburg Recorder Sept. 12, 2006

One in every seven children in California is affected by asthma. With this statistic in mind, Rafer Johnson Junior High has partnered with statewide organizations to raise a flag to promote air quality awareness in its school and community.

In accordance with the American Lung Association of Central California and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, Rafer Johnson and other Valley schools are taking part in the school-based agenda, the Air Quality Flag Program.

Under the program, Rafer Johnson's students search the Internet daily for air conditions, and then hang the colored flag that marks the air quality for that day.

A green flag indicates that the air in the area is expected to be good, and a yellow flag signifies moderate air quality. On a yellow day, children who have severe levels of asthma or other pulmonary conditions are advised to be careful when participating in physical activities outside, especially if they find it hard to breath, start wheezing or feel like they are getting sick.

An orange flag means that the air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups. Students with asthma and other lung or heart conditions should reduce how long and how hard they play outside. A red flag is a warning sign that air quality is unhealthy for everyone. On such a day, all students' outdoor activities are limited.

Sally Robinson, learning coordinator at Rafer Johnson, spoke highly of the program and the student involvement that it calls for.

"We want our kids, particularly our asthma kids, to get involved and say to themselves, 'You know what, I need to be more careful with how hard I am playing because the air may be bad,'" she said.

According to Robinson, Rafer Johnson has its share of asthmatic students who cannot part with their inhalers, and the school is trying to do something to make life easier for these medically at-risk students.

Eighth-grade student Whitney Snider, who has asthma and keeps an inhaler in the school's office, said she is excited about the program.

"It's good because now I'll see the flag and know when the air is unhealthy, and I can stay inside," she said.

Whitney said she does not have a severe case of asthma, but she gets short of breath when the air quality is bad and when she plays really hard at physical education.

Robinson stressed the importance of teaching students about air quality and air pollution, especially since we live here in the Central Valley.

Informational posters on air quality are placed in every classroom, and teachers will talk to their students about the impact of air pollution on health, teach them preventive methods and remind them to pay attention to the flags. Under the program, teachers attended a workshop. The idea is that these teachers will educate their students on the things they learned.

But the program is not geared only toward educating the students. Parent involvement and awareness are pivotal, Robinson said. Parents and guardians will receive a detailed packet explaining the program, its goals and parent participation. The American Lung Association of

Central California also provides parent group training in English and Spanish. Other district schools are getting ready for the program that Rafer Johnson started last week.

For more information on the program or to set up parent group training call 800-LUNG-USA.

Today is 11th Spare the Air Day of season

Michael Cabanatuan, staff writer
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, September 12, 2006

Bay Area air quality officials have called a Spare the Air Day for today -- the 11th of the season.

With meteorologists forecasting unhealthy air, particularly in the area stretching from Concord to Livermore, the air district is urging commuters to take public transportation. Cars are the biggest source of ground-level ozone, or smog.

Air quality officials also urge people to postpone painting, staining, disinfecting or working in the yard with gasoline-powered equipment, to curtail the use of aerosol products and to refuel cars after dusk.

But commuters will have to pay for their rides, because the free-transit program covered only the first six Spare the Air Days.

Tuesday is a Spare-the-Air Day (but no free rides)

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2006

Rising temperatures and expected unhealthy smog levels prompted the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to declare Tuesday a Spare the Air Day, urging residents to take transit to work and avoid using polluting equipment and chemicals.

Tuesday will be the summer's 11th such day, and unlike the first six days, will not involve free transit rides. The budget for free bus, rail and ferry rides ran out on July 21.

The warmer temperatures, combined with stagnant air, are expected to foster the creation of ground-level ozone from auto exhaust and other pollutants, such as the volatile organic compounds commonly found in paints, household cleaners and hair spray. Air officials also urge residents to avoid yard work with gasoline-powered equipment, especially during morning hours.

Supervisors weigh air pollution fee proposal

Dana M. Nichols
Stockton Record, Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2006

SAN ANDREAS - Calaveras County supervisors are divided over whether to continue a taxpayer subsidy to farmers and other large property owners who cause air pollution by burning brush and other plant debris.

The county-run Air Pollution Control District spends about \$19,500 a year to monitor and regulate smoke pollution from about 1,600 properties larger than 5 acres. County staffers are proposing to charge the owners of each of those properties a \$12 annual fee to cover the cost of tracking the smoke and timing burns to minimize the impact on residents.

But county supervisors holding a study session on the matter Monday failed to give a clear signal on whether they want to end the subsidy. Supervisors Victoria Erickson and Tom Tryon said they oppose the proposed fee.

Supervisors Merita Callaway and Bill Claudino said they would support the fee.

Supervisor Steve Wilensky said he would not take a public position on the matter until he was able to consult with the county's legal counsel.

Wilensky, who operates an apple orchard, said he applies for the burn permits himself and therefore might have a conflict of interest should he weigh in on the matter.

Tryon, the other member of the board who earns his living through agriculture, running a ranch near Angels Camp, offered no explanation for his opposition to the fee and did not express any concern that he might have a conflict of interest on the issue.

The Calaveras County Farm Bureau opposed the proposed fee.

"I know \$12 is not a lot to argue over, but it's another fee," said Steve Kafka, president of the bureau and a forester with Sierra Pacific Industries. Kafka said he also fears that a new fee would discourage property owners from acting to reduce fire hazards.

Brian Moss, director of the county's Environmental Management Agency, said he sympathized with agriculture's need to control costs but said it doesn't make sense to give some property owners a break on air pollution control costs while charging others.

Many of those who would pay the fee live on rural lots larger than 5 acres but do not actively farm or raise cattle.

Callaway asked whether charging all property owners a \$12 fee accurately reflected the cost of scheduling the burns and monitoring the pollution on different sizes of property.

Lakhmir Grewal, head of the Calaveras County Air Pollution Control District, said some very large burns to reduce the fuel load in forests, commonly known as controlled burns, are much more expensive for the district to plan and monitor.

He said that is because such controlled burns require detailed plans to prevent damage to human health and to manage the fire, and the district must review those plans. "Some of those permits are costing thousands of dollars" in district staff time, he said.

He said some counties charge air pollution fees of more than \$1,000 for property owners who do large controlled burns.

The proposal Grewal and Moss brought to supervisors, however, would charge a flat \$12 whether a property owner simply burned brush piles near a home on a 10-acre lot or needed to do a 300-acre controlled burn on forestland.

Wilensky asked Grewal and Moss if they thought imposing a fee might simply drive some property owners to go ahead and burn without getting the required air pollution permit.

Moss said no. He said property owners already drive to the district office to get the required free permits, and the inconvenience of driving to the office is a greater barrier than a \$12 fee. Also, he noted that people who burn illegally without a permit can pay substantial penalties.

Grewal said that recently a farmer had been fined \$1,000 for an illegal orchard burn, and a developer been fined \$5,000 for an illegal burn.

Legislation affecting business

By Jake Henshaw

Visalia Times-Delta, Monday, Sept. 11, 2006

They still had hopes of passing a few modest bills in August in the Capitol, but for the most part California businesses are playing defense as the Legislature wraps up its work for the year.

They are trying to defeat proposals to increase the minimum wage, impose emission caps to control global warming, boost benefits for permanently disabled workers and force big businesses to provide health care for its employees.

"As usual, at the end of the session, it comes down to that," Vince Sollitto, spokesman for the California Chamber of Commerce, said of the effort to defeat measures that businesses fear will hurt job creation and competitiveness.

Michael Shaw, assistant state director for the National Federation of Independent Business, said his group is pushing a couple of bills to aid small businesses by requiring a state study of the cost of regulations on them and setting up a state Web site linking state agencies that regulate them.

Businesses appear to have already lost battles to reinstitute a tax credit for the purchase of manufacturing equipment and the four-day workweek for interested workers without overtime pay. They now face a tough battle against any minimum wage increase because the governor supports a \$1 boost while Democrats and unions generally agree with the governor but also want automatic future increases indexed to inflation.

Democrats also are pushing for revisions for workers' compensation. Changes have cut premiums 50 percent, but injured workers claim it also has cut benefits for permanently disabled workers 50 percent. The bill is still being finalized.

The Legislature was scheduled to end its regular session for the year Aug. 31.

Bills favored by business

- AB2330, Assemblyman Juan Arambula, D-Fresno: Requires the state to study the cost of regulations on small businesses.
- SB1436, Sen. Liz Figueroa, D-Sunol: Directs the state to set up an Internet link to all state agencies that have a significant role in regulating small businesses.

Bills opposed by business

- AB1835, Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, D-Mountain View: Increases increase the minimum wage from the current \$6.75 to \$7.75 in two steps over two years. It then would automatically provide for future increases indexed to the rate of inflation.
- SB1162, Sen. Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles: Increases the minimum wage from the current \$6.75 to \$7.75 in two steps. The initial increase would come within 60 days of the bill being signed, versus AB 1835, which authorizes the first step on July 1, 2007. Future increases also would be indexed to the rate of inflation.

Air quality

- AB32, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, D-Los Angeles and Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills: Requires state officials to set a cap on greenhouse gas emissions and monitor their prevalence.
- AB1101, Assemblywoman Jenny Oropeza, D-Long Beach: Gives ports, airports and rail yards that attract large numbers of diesel-powered vehicles the power to reduce diesel emissions.
- SB1205, Sen. Martha Escutia, D-Whittier: Increases penalties for pollution from sources other than motor vehicles from \$1,000 to a range of \$10,000 up to \$100,000 with the fines deposited in a new Children's Breathing Rights Fund, for which uses would be established later.
- SB1252, Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter: Authorizes a penalty of up to \$25,000, in addition to other existing penalties, for emissions of particulates that violate federal air quality standards.

- SB1368, Senate leader Don Perata, D-Oakland: Establishes a greenhouse gas emissions performance standard for public and private utilities.

Resources

- SB 646, Sen. Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica: Tightens up the procedures for farm and timber companies to get waivers from the operating rules for discharging into public water, which include obtaining permits. The bill also would impose a fee for waivers.
- AB 2641, Assemblyman Joe Coto, D-San Jose: Requires developers who discover Indian burial grounds to consult with likely tribal descendants regarding appropriate preservation.

Health

- SB1379, Senate leader Don Perata, D-Oakland, and Sen. Deborah Ortiz, D-Sacramento: Creates the nation's first biomonitoring program to assess chemical contamination of the general public to aid public health planning.
- SB1414, Sen. Carole Migden, D-San Francisco: Requires companies with 10,000 or more workers to spend an amount equal to 8 percent of their payroll on health insurance or pay that amount to Medi-Cal.

Legal issues

- SB1489, Sen. Denise Ducheny, D-San Diego: Authorizes the California attorney general to recover attorneys' fees and costs when he wins cases enforcing laws on such issues as the environment, civil rights, consumer fraud, corporate responsibility and gambling with the goal of making such actions self-funding.
- SB1737, Sen. Liz Figueroa, D-Sunol: Sets timelines and other rules for consumer rebates.

Report links global warming, storms

Keay Davidson, Chronicle Science Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, September 12, 2006

Scientists say they have found what could be the key to ending a yearlong debate about what is making hurricanes more violent and common -- evidence that human-caused global warming is heating the ocean and providing more fuel for the world's deadliest storms.

For the past 13 months, researchers have debated whether humanity is to blame for a surge in hurricanes since the mid-1990s or whether the increased activity is merely a natural cycle that occurs every several decades.

Employing 80 computer simulations, scientists from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and other institutions concluded that there is only one answer: that the burning of fossil fuels, which warms the climate, is also heating the oceans.

Humans, Ben Santer, the report's lead author, told The Chronicle, are making hurricanes globally more violent "and violent hurricanes more common" -- at least, in the latter case, in the northern Atlantic Ocean. The findings were published Monday in the latest issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Hurricanes are born from tropical storms fueled by rising warm, moist air in the tropics. The Earth's rotation puts a spin on the storms, causing them to suck in more and more warm, moist air -- thus making them bigger and more ferocious.

In that regard, the report says, since 1906, sea-surface temperatures have warmed by between one-third and two-thirds of a degree Celsius -- or between 0.6 and 1.2 degrees Fahrenheit -- in the tropical parts of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, which are hurricane breeding grounds.

Critics of the theory that greenhouse gases are making hurricanes worse remained unconvinced by the latest research.

Chris Landsea, a top hurricane expert, praised the Proceedings paper as a worthwhile contribution to science, but said the authors failed to persuasively counter earlier objections -- that warmer seas would have negligible impact on hurricane activity.

Landsea, science and operations officer at the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami, noted that modern satellite observations have made hurricanes easier to detect and analyze, and that could foster the impression of long-term trends in hurricane frequency or violence that are, in fact, illusory. The surge in hurricane activity since the mid-1990s is just the latest wave in repeating cycles of hurricane activity, he said.

Philip Klotzbach, a hurricane forecaster at Colorado State University, said that "sea-surface temperatures have certainly warmed over the past century, and ... there is probably a human-induced (global warming) component." But his own research indicates "there has been very little change in global hurricane activity over the past 20 years, where the data is most reliable."

Researchers report in the Proceedings paper an 84 percent chance that at least two-thirds of the rise in ocean temperatures in these so-called hurricane breeding grounds is caused by human activities -- and primarily by the production of greenhouse gases.

Tom Wigley, one of the world's top climate modelers and a co-author of the paper, said in a teleconference last week that the scientists tried to figure out what caused the oceans to warm by running many different computer models based on possible single causes. Those causes ranged from human production of greenhouse gases to natural variations in solar intensity.

Wigley said that when the researchers reviewed the results, they found that only one model was best able to explain changing ocean temperatures, and it pointed to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The most infamous greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide, a product of human burning of fossil fuels in cars and factories.

Wigley estimated the odds as smaller than 1 percent that ocean warming could be blamed on random fluctuations in hurricane activity, as some scientists suggest.

The debate among scientists was triggered in August 2005, a few weeks before Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, when hurricane expert Kerry Emanuel of MIT wrote an article for the journal *Nature* proposing that since the 1970s, ocean warming had made hurricanes about 50 percent more intense in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Later, two scientific teams, both at Georgia Tech, estimated that warmer sea-surface temperatures were boosting both hurricane intensity and the number of the two worst types of hurricanes, known as Category 4 and Category 5 storms.

Nineteen scientists from 10 institutions were involved in the Proceedings paper. In addition to Lawrence Livermore, other U.S. institutions included Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, NASA, UC Merced, Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla (San Diego County), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Santer's co-authors included six Livermore colleagues -- Peter J. Gleckler, Krishna AchutaRao, Jim Boyle, Mike Fiorino, Steve Klein and Karl Taylor -- and 12 other researchers from elsewhere in the United States and from Germany and England.

Assuming that warmer water equals more bad hurricanes, scary times could be ahead for inhabitants of hurricane-prone regions.

That's because "the models that we've used to understand the causes of (ocean warming) in these hurricane formation regions predict that the oceans are going to get a lot warmer over the 21st century," Santer said in a statement. "That causes some concern."

How hurricanes form in the Atlantic Ocean

Hurricanes are born in far western Africa, where modest windstorms known as tropical disturbances pick up moisture from the warm sea and begin to whirl. As atmospheric pressures drop, tropical depressions form with wind speeds up to 38 mph. As they speed westward they become tropical storms, lashing the ocean with sheets of rain and winds blowing up to 70 mph or more, finally building into hurricanes with winds exceeding 100 mph. -- Tropical disturbance -- Tropical depression -- Tropical storm -- Hurricane Source: NOAA, The New York Times Joe Shoulak / The Chronicle

Dogs may aggravate the symptoms of asthmatic children

Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, Sept. 10, 2006

THE shedding and chewing of shoes may be the least of the family dog's transgressions.

Asthmatic children who lived with dogs coughed more, produced more phlegm and had more bronchial responses to [air pollutants](#) than those with no pets, or those who lived only with cats, according to research that appeared last week in Environmental Health Perspectives.

Dr. Rob McConnell, a professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California and the study's lead author, speculated that the increased asthmatic response of children with dogs is due to higher levels of endotoxin — a part of the cell wall of certain bacteria commonly found in dirt. Endotoxins are known to produce inflammation of the lungs and can be tracked in by dogs from outside.

But McConnell cautioned that there might be other explanations for the study's findings. Children with dogs, for example, might be more likely to play outside and thus be more exposed to air pollution. "It may have nothing to do with the dog," he said.

So don't take any hasty, pet-related actions.

"I think that if a child has asthma, they should have a pediatrician with a knowledge of asthma following them," he said. "Any decision should be based on a case-by-case basis."

Healthy vending (really)

You've worked through lunch again because the phone won't stop ringing, the e-mails won't stop flying and your major report has to be done today.

The next thing you know you're staring at a bank of vending machines to find something quick to eat. This situation, or others where the only option is a meal from a machine, doesn't have to be a sad scenario. But it depends on the selection available when playing this version of "the slots."

Vending machines aren't exactly synonymous with fine food or good nutrition, but the overall bad rap isn't fair, says Alan Plaisted of Atlanta-based vending company Southern Refreshment Services.

"Vending gets such a bad rap all the time as unhealthy. People don't expect to be satisfied, so there's image improvement we need to do," he says.

First came the simple changes such as more granola bars next to candy bars and bottled water next to soft drinks. But — just like in any business — what the consumer buys is what will appear

for sale. Aramark, one of the big national players in vending, will fill machines with fresh salads, hard-boiled eggs, carrot sticks, yogurt, cubes of cheese and fresh fruit.

"We understand that people work a lot of hours, and the average lunch today is less than 36 minutes. We have to provide what makes employees happy," says Aramark's Brian Zaslow.

So don't despair if you have to use the vending machines for your lunch. There's much more than soda and chips to choose from.

Jackie Clark, of the National Automatic Merchandising Association says, "Because of technological advances in the machines, we can offer a wider array of products, even machines that cook hot foods like grilled chicken or pasta." NAMA has its own Balanced for Life campaign to help vending companies develop healthier choices.

For example, Aramark launched a Just4U healthy vending program with foods that are lower in fat and calories and beverages that include water or 100 percent fruit juices.

If you want healthier snacks, there's usually a number posted on the vending machine. If not, you'll just have to hope the person stocking the machines will notice that healthy snacks are selling better and will, therefore, increase those options.

Homework rules

How far should you go to control the homework habits of your children? William Stixrud, a Silver Spring, Md., neuropsychologist specializing in child and adolescent learning issues, offers parents this advice:

- Model behavior early. Young children and pre-teens tend to be more receptive to demonstrations of good habits and more willing to abide by parental restrictions. Set clear study rules (no IM'ing, watching TV, listening to music) while studying. Teach kids as soon as they get their first homework assignment that dividing their attention can affect how well they learn.
- Set the environment. It's up to you to see that your children have a quiet place to study, away from distractions and with adequate space for books and papers. It doesn't have to be a separate bedroom — the dining room could suffice — as long as other members of the household are respectful.
- Back off as they get older. There may be no piece of advice that tests parents more than this one. Get used to it. Too much parental oversight and interference can trigger a rebellion in teens. Better to take a deep breath and express confidence in a teen's ability to make positive study choices — even if they don't match yours.
- Engage them. Have an open discussion with your child about study-time distractions and seek his or her perspective on the matter. Parents can help kids test the effects of multi-tasking on learning by designing a rating scale to measure their level of focus and how much they remember under different study conditions.
- Respect them. There is no one surefire strategy to promote learning. It is important to allow students to figure out what strategies work best for them.

Less boozy booze?

The liquor, beer and wine that Americans drink today is less intoxicating than the alcohol they drank in the 1950s, according to an analysis in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.

In 2002 beer was the most-favored alcoholic beverage, making up 60 percent of alcohol consumed. In 1950, 80 percent of liquor sold was in the "whiskey" class (straight, bonded, blended, etc.). In 1950 the alcohol content of wine sold in the United States averaged 16.75 percent; by 2002 that figure was 11.45 percent. In 1950 the alcohol content of beer averaged 5.02 percent; it was 4.65 percent in 2002. The data come from the Alcohol Research Group, a nonprofit funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

[L.A. Times correction, Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2006:](#)

FOR THE RECORD

Power plants: An article in the California section Friday about a South Coast Air Quality Management District plan to allow builders of new power plants to buy air pollution credits incorrectly stated that under an open-market credit program normally used by commercial power plants, they would have to pay for the credits annually. In fact, they would have to pay only once.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2006:](#)

UC Merced goes green

Campus seeks to be a leader in environment-friendly operations.

The University of California at Merced wants to go green, and in the process can set a good example for all of us in the Valley.

The campus is making huge efforts to conserve energy and resources, from water-saving devices in dormitory bathrooms to biodegradable plates in the university dining commons. They're even installing carpets made from recycled soda bottles. More than three-quarters of UC Merced's construction debris has been recycled.

The goal is to win the U.S. Green Building Council's "silver standard," a measure of environment-friendly operations that, according to UC Merced officials, no American university has yet met. The council awards points for various steps to reduce energy and resource consumption. It takes 33 points to win the silver standard.

Buildings close to public transportation win a point, using recycled construction materials is worth five and installing waterless urinals gets three points.

The commitment to a green operation is part of a larger promise from the university system that the new Merced campus would have a strong focus on environmental issues. That's appropriate in a Valley with air quality and other environmental problems long thought by many to be intractable.

It doesn't come cheap, at least at first. As is typical with new technologies, such devices and processes are often more expensive than their traditional counterparts. But in the long run, energy and materials costs will only go up, shortening the time when savings in those areas amortize the initial cost of all the new green technology.

It's the path to the future, and it's appropriate and laudable that UC Merced, part of a magnificent system of research universities, should be a leader.

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[Capital Press Ag Weekly Editorial Fri. Sept. 8, 2006:](#)
Clearing air isn't all about global warming

California is leading the nation in legislation to regulate greenhouse gas pollutants, which has some industries in the state - including agriculture - nervous. It could also be a sign of things to come for the rest of the West Coast and the nation.

Some are touting the bill to impose a cap on carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases, and reduce them 25 percent by 2020, as an effort to counter global warming.

Critics, like Alan Caruba, of the Caruba Organization in South Orange, N.J., say it will be bad for business in California and is unnecessary because global warming is not actually happening.

"California is about to commit eco-suicide and wants the rest of the nation to join it," Caruba writes in a Sept. 4 column on AXcessNews.com. "The business and industry that will flee the Golden State is incalculable. The danger of these anti-energy policies to the future of the nation is beyond comprehension."

Caruba goes on to say that the claims, like those made by U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., in an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle, that there is scientific consensus that global warming is happening now is "a very big lie."

Caruba says: "Far from any consensus, there is a growing body of scientific evidence that utterly disputes and debunks the claims made for global warming."

He also says: "There is no need for the control of greenhouse gas emissions."

What Caruba seems to ignore is that California has some serious air quality problems across wide swaths of the state, including the Los Angeles Basin, Inland Empire and San Joaquin Valley and Bay Area.

Even if Caruba and other global warming skeptics are correct, the fact remains that conditions in California are ideal to create smog in California. Abundant sunshine reacts with particles in the air to form smog that gets trapped in the valleys nestled between large mountain ranges.

Global warming or not, California's air is all-too-often unhealthy in far too many parts of the state.

Fortunately for California agriculture and industry, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was able to negotiate some safety valves in the legislation.

It includes a provision for trading emissions credits that will allow producers of greenhouse gases - who are also producers of energy, products and jobs that help fuel the state economy - to continue to do business. That option could also provide a valuable incentive for business to reduce emissions to benefit their companies economically.

Caruba is correct to be concerned that this legislation is just a first successful volley in a fight to pass similar legislation at the federal level. As Caruba noted, Feinstein recently touted a plan to fight global warming with legislation she says she will introduce in the next Congressional session that has similarities to the California legislation.

It would also not be surprising to see other states, like Washington and Oregon, where the climate change mantra is also resonating to follow California's lead to control emissions even further.

California has the political clout, and population numbers, to make automakers pay heed to emissions restrictions on cars that smaller states can't pull off alone.

As to whether the new emission standards will do anything to slow climate change, that's a question still open to debate. But this will clear the air a bit more in smog-prone areas of the state.